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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005761

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS AFTER AMMAN'S ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

REF: AMMAN 5760

Classified By: Charge David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

1. (C) Summary. Jordan's King is planning next steps to advance the moderate, anti-violence message of the recent Islamic Conference held in Amman. These include further work to de-legitimize extremists' use of "psuedo" fatwas to justify terrorism, development of a core canon of books which will create an educational background resistant to extremism, and outreach to Muslim communities and other faiths in the West. In response to the London bombing, the Hashemites are preparing a document summarizing the condemnations of it by leading participants in the Islamic Conference. It will be made public, endorsed by the OIC and reinforced through a fatwa of the OIC academy of Islamic jurisprudence. End Summary.

2. (C) The King and his team, led by his pious cousin Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, are planning next steps to build on the July 4-6 Islamic Conference in Amman. That event brought consensus from a sizable group of well known establishment and popular Muslim leaders, including Ayatollah Sistani, behind certain principles designed to blunt the ability of extremists to use the language of Islam to justify terrorist attacks (reftel). In this embryonic period, and given the broad cross-section of participants, the initial focus of this initiative is on the basics: no one can call an adherent to the major eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence an apostate; fatwas can only be issued by qualified clerics, with checks and balances; and if a Muslim living in a non-Muslim society enjoys safety and the right to worship, he must abide by the laws of that society.

3. (C) In the next phase, lower level experts will meet in Amman with particular focus on the issue of what constitutes a legitimate fatwa ) with the aim of educating Muslims that the fatwas of such extremists as Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab Zarqawi have no standing. The Jordanians argue that while it will take time for this campaign to have an impact, the religious establishment's failure to challenge the right of these figures to issue fatwas had contributed to extremists' popularity. The experts are putting together a document codifying appropriate procedures and qualifications for fatwa issuance, to be endorsed by the OIC and presented to the UN as a document of the OIC members. Another step entails gaining an agreement on a "book of books;" Ghazi described this as a canon of works to be read at all levels of study, from kindergarten to the doctorate level, which scholars agree encapsulates the correct, moderate, tolerant message of Islam. Students taught from such works will be unlikely to be swayed by extremist rhetoric. The Jordanians will be seeking help in production and particularly distribution of such works.

4. (C) The King is working closely with Malaysian partners to advance this overall process. While some Saudi resistance has been encountered, the King maintains that he has a green light from Crown Prince Abdullah, who is said not to be displeased by an outside initiative that challenges his own radical religious fringe. Prince Ghazi will form a follow up group of forty activists from each Muslim state; Gulf financing is supporting the initiative.

5. (C) Separately, they are working on a conference of Iraqis, secular and religious, to bring Sunni and Shia together to build on the Islamic Conference message. The main objective will be release of fatwas forbidding the use of violence against fellow Muslims, and denying that any member of the major schools of Islamic jurisprudence can be called an apostate, one source of alleged legitimacy for Sunni/Shia violence.

6. (C) The Jordanians are also seeking to use this process to reach out to Muslim audiences in the West, and to call for coexistence and non-violence among the major faiths. King Abdullah's September travels in the UK and U.S. will give him ample opportunities to address Muslim and non-Muslim audiences on these themes. Meanwhile, they are developing a sharper media strategy to draw attention in the West to this initiative.

7. (C) Following up the King's own strong statements of condemnation in the wake of the London bombing, the Hashemites are preparing a document detailing similar statements by the principal conference participants. Once it

is ready, they will ask the OIC President to make it a public document of the organization, and ask that the OIC's academy of jurisprudence endorse it through a fatwa.

HALE